MESSAGE NOTES · NOVEMBER 2026

Prayer as a Body

"When we tune to the same thing, we are powerful."

> [18] *"Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* [19] *Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.* [20] *For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."*
>
> MATTHEW 18:18–20 · ESV

The Finkenwalde Brotherhood

You may not know the name Finkenwalde, but you've likely heard of the man who started it: **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**. During the war in Germany, Finkenwalde was a semi-monastic community and an underground seminary.

Bonhoeffer believed the church needed a new kind of community: a disciplined life of prayer and Scripture lived together, not only in monasteries. He visited different denominations and monastic communities to learn what kept people together and what made them holy. That conviction shaped his books *Discipleship* (1937) and *Life Together* (1939).

NOTES

A Day at Finkenwalde

EACH MORNING, BEFORE BREAKFAST, TOGETHER

i **A HYMN**

ii **THE PSALMS**
Prayed aloud together, often antiphonally

iii **SCRIPTURE**
Long readings from the Old and New Testaments

iv **PRAYER**
Led by Bonhoeffer for the community

v **SILENT MEDITATION**
A half hour on the same short passage all week

vi **EVENING PRAYER**
Lectures, work, walks, sports and music filled the hours between

Some students resisted at first, finding the silence and structure "too Catholic." But many later described Finkenwalde as **the most formative period of their lives.** Two pillars held it together: **prayer and community.** You had to really do life together, and you had to be saturated in prayer.

Something the evangelical church has largely lost: it wasn't just prayer they believed was powerful. *It was corporate prayer.*

> *A hundred pianos tuned to the same fork are automatically in tune with each other. They agree "by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard" that each one has to submit to on its own.*
>
> — A. W. TOZER, THE PURSUIT OF GOD

From the Gospels through the whole New Testament runs one line: we are greater when we are together.

I Corporate prayer is a guarantee of the presence of God.

"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." This isn't a verse pulled out of context. **It is a promise: when you gather, I am there.** Spiritual disciplines and the formation of the soul are vitally important, but we also need to be together, knocked in the face by the presence of God. Something leaps in your soul when you and your brothers and sisters feel the manifest presence of God in the same room.

- **That power starts when people choose to gather and say, "Let's intercede. Let's join our voices."**

II Corporate prayer expands me into a person of love.

We all fight a great selfishness. We show up with our desires, hurts, needs, anxieties and priorities. But gathering corporately forces us to **focus on Jesus and on others.**

FIRST WEDNESDAY PRAYER

The first Wednesday of each month we gather for corporate prayer and end in a circle, presenting our needs and hopes. It forces us to carry each other's burdens, intercede beyond our own wants, and hope for things that may have nothing to do with us. The same happens in our Cohorts.

> *"A Christian fellowship lives and exists by the intercession of its members for one another, or it collapses."*
>
> — DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, LIFE TOGETHER

III We are a body.

> *19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*
>
> EPHESIANS 2:19–22 · ESV

We can forget that while each of us is a body part, **together we are the body**, and together we are being built into a dwelling place for God. Bonhoeffer saw it quickly: no matter which tradition he studied, one thing was in all of them. *People who prayed together.*

SINCE COVID: LIVES OF CHOSEN ISOLATION

FRACTIONS OF INTERACTION · FRACTIONS OF HONESTY · FRACTIONS OF LETTING PEOPLE IN · FRACTIONS OF OURSELVES

Communal prayer is part of a larger truth Bonhoeffer believed was the only way forward: **a life invested more in each other than in isolation**, dedicated to the church, its people and discipleship.

It's built right into the Lord's Prayer: "OUR FATHER" "OUR DAILY BREAD"

NOTES

Together, Not Alone

Things don't look good. Not because of one election cycle, but because secularism, paganism, Islam and a focus on self are taking over our country and our world, and technology, sexuality and ideology are moving in directions we may need a century to recover from. This isn't doomsday talk. These are signposts of hard times ahead, which means **the church has to become more essential in our lives, not less.**

We can't become what we are called to become alone. We can't hurry and distract ourselves with hobbies, sports, clubs and side hustles. We must shed what the world calls important and make the church, her body and the formation of our souls the main focus of our lives.

Bonhoeffer was forced into radical change. We don't have to be. We don't have to wait for war or for times to get worse. God has called us to a long obedience in the same direction, together.

> *27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 1:27 · ESV

WHERE WE LAND

Prayer is the greatest invitation to let the Spirit teach us how to die to ourselves. Corporate prayer is the greatest invitation to learn how to live for each other.

FOR THE WEEK · REFLECT & DISCUSS

01 Where have I settled for "fractions" of honesty, interaction or letting people in?

02 Who could I pray with this week, and whose burdens could I carry in prayer?

03 What would it take for me to be in the room for our next First Wednesday of prayer?